



Beatrix Farrand with Cubby, in California, c. 1934. During Max Farrand's directorship of the Huntington Library, the Farrands spent winters in California, where Mrs. Farrand was involved with the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and private clients.

Beatrix Farrand

(1872-1959)

Patrick Chassé

Maine played a very important part in the life of Beatrix Farrand. From her formative years, through her most productive period, and into her twilight years, a substantial part of her intellectual and professional life was rooted here.

Beatrix Cadwalader Jones, born in New York on June 19, 1872, was introduced to nature and native plants during the building of her parents' summer home in Bar Harbor in 1883. Her aunt Edith Wharton, her uncle, and her grandmother, all of whom exhibited an appreciation for gardening and landscape, influenced her early interest in horticulture and landscape design. Her early education came through private tutors, as was true of most young women of her family's social standing.

In 1893, Beatrix met Charles Sprague Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum, and was invited to study with him there, learning botany and horticulture, and developing her lifelong passion for related books, prints, and drawings.

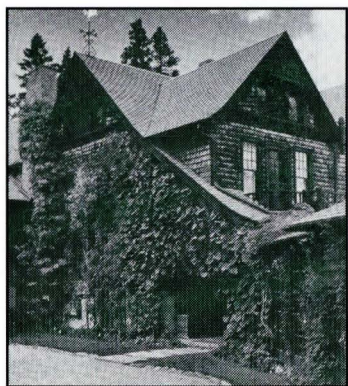
Sargent urged her to travel abroad in 1895, and she studied gardens and parks in England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Scotland. Her impressions were recorded in her journal, including a visit to Gertrude Jekyll on July 3. Jekyll, a prominent figure in landscape gardening at the time, championed harmony and subtle blending of color for total effect (after her mentor, William Robinson) and the use of native plant materials. Beatrix also visited William Robinson (a great proponent of naturalized "wild" landscape) on this trip, and forged a friendship that lasted until Robinson's death, in 1935.

Upon her return from Europe, Beatrix Jones set up a design practice in her mother's New York house, and quickly built a professional reputation designing private gardens in New York, Rhode Island, and Maine. In 1899, her association with other prominent landscape architects led her, along with eleven of her colleagues, to become a founding member of the American Society of Landscape Architects – the only woman in that group.

In 1912, she broadened her design work to include college and university campus design, beginning with Princeton University and including subsequent work at Yale University, University of Chicago, California Institute of Technology, and several others.

On Mount Desert Island, cottages and gardens reflected the tastes and temperaments of their owners, and the times. Because of the dramatic coastal topography of Mount Desert Island – often likened to that of Italy – and a taste for Italian art and architecture in the late 19th century, Italianate “villas” and gardens were often reproduced.

English garden influence was visible in the “informal country style” of many estates and in the thriving herbaceous borders. The many “naturalistic” gardens bore witness to a strong presence of the “return to nature” movement, in evidence here since before 1880.



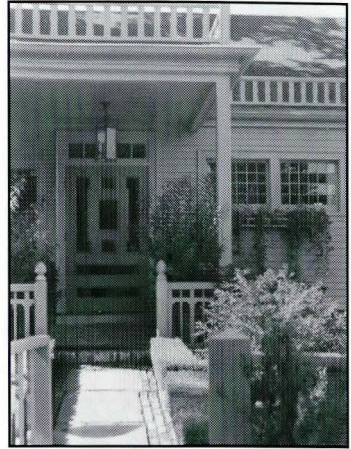
The main entrance of “Reef Point” (c. 1950) displayed a collection of vigorous vines, including Clematis and climbing Hydrangea, and Mrs. Farrand’s bench.

The evolution of the gardens on Mount Desert Island, including those designed by Beatrix Farrand, represent a cross-section of the history of that formative period in American Landscape Architecture.

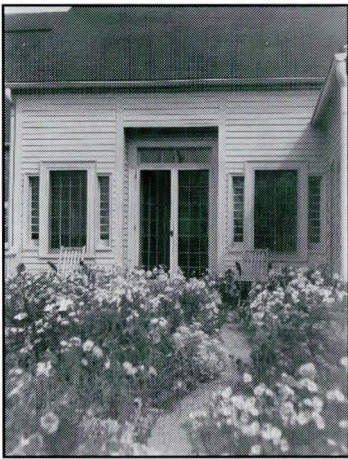
Beatrix married Yale historian Max Farrand in 1913. After her mother gave her title to “Reef Point,” the family’s Bar Harbor, Maine summer estate, in 1917, she began its conversion into “Reef Point

Gardens” – a botanical garden, library, and horticultural experiment station. Plants, especially Ericaceous plants, were imported from all over the world, and the archive grew to include the design drawings of Gertrude Jekyll and others.

However, without a nearby supply of keen graduate students, scholarly use of Reef Point Gardens did not attain the level Mrs. Farrand hoped for, and she reluctantly decided to abandon the project in 1955. The house was razed, and its parts skillfully assembled by architect Robert W. Patterson into a retirement apartment at Garland Farm. Her favorite plants were used in her new gardens there, and the remaining living collection was moved to two other new gardens designed by Charles K. Savage in Northeast Harbor. The library, archives, and herbarium were entrusted



The front door of the newly created Addition at Garland Farm (c.1958) had been the front door at “Reef Point,” designed by the Boston architectural firm of Roche and Tilden in 1883. The bluestone and brick path is framed by crisp box hedges.



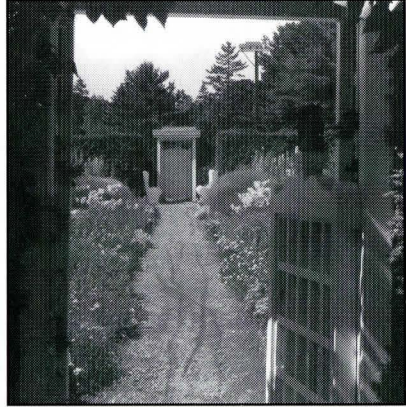
Mrs. Farrand’s sitting room at Garland Farm faced south into her parterre garden. Note the chairs for sitting in the garden.

to the newly established Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of California at Berkeley.

Beatrice Cadwalader Farrand died in Bar Harbor on February 28, 1959, at the age of 86. Throughout a long and satisfying career, she made numerous contributions to the field of landscape architecture. The characteristically close and enduring working relationships she developed with her clients approached the artist/patron intimacy of past centuries and could well serve as a model for a modern generation of professionals and clients who think a garden is “finished” when construction is complete.



Farrand's design of the tiny Seal Harbor Green, recently restored by the Garden Club of Mt. Desert, was commissioned by summer residents. It is one of Mrs. Farrand's few designed "public spaces."



Miss Mildred McCormick's garden in Bar Harbor (c. 1934) is, along with the garden at Garland Farm, one of Mrs. Farrand's most intimate garden designs.



The Saterlee garden, at Great Head, was a garden room set in the woods overlooking Sand Beach. The property is now part of Acadia National Park.

The most notable surviving examples of her work include Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.; the Graduate Quadrangle at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey; Memorial Quadrangle at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden, Seal Harbor, Maine; and Garland Farm, Bar Harbor, Maine.

She had worked on more than 50 projects in the Mount Desert area. Her work in Maine is of particular significance to those interested in regional landscape history. Although many of her designs were for clients on Mount Desert Island, and much of her effort went into her own beloved Reef Point gardens in Bar Harbor, the truism that gardens usually die with their owners is proved by the scarcity of surviving examples of her work.

The newly formed Beatrix Farrand Society plans to rekindle the educational goals of Reef Point Gardens at Garland Farm, as a living memorial to Mrs. Farrand.

Now president of the Beatrix Farrand Society, Patrick Chassé, ASLA, earned a Master of Landscape Architecture degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, following graduate studies in botany, environmental education and design. He has worked on projects ranging from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum courtyard to reconstruction of an Ottoman villa garden on the Bosphorus in Istanbul. He is writing a book on moss culture.



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See the Beatrix Farrand Society website for more information: <http://members.aol.com/SaveGarlandFarm/>.